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RHMFISS/HQ USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 003633

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SUBJECT: COMMUNIST LEADER YECHURY: PARTY WILL NOT BLOCK 123  
AGREEMENT; GIVES OPINION ON POLITICAL HORIZON (C-NE7-01274)

Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary. In an August 9 meeting, Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) Polit Bureau member and Head of the International Department Sitaram Yechury told PolCouns:

-- The Left will not join the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in demanding a vote in next week's Parliament discussion on the 123 Agreement, nor will it move to bring down the government. The Left feels the BJP is trying to corner it into proving its opposition credentials over 123, and if pushed will try to paint the BJP as being jealous that Yechury it was not able to secure a civ-nuke agreement when it was in power. Comment: Several MPs and senior journalists to whom we have spoken recently agree that the Left will not fatally gore the UPA government. End Comment.

-- He expects the upcoming Monsoon Session of parliament to be contentious, likely delayed a day by BJP theatrics aimed at attacking the government on the 123 Agreement, but ultimately the Agreement debate will pass.

-- During his recent trip to Nepal, Yechury sensed a realization by the Maoists that their voter support is less than they had believed, which causes them to fear the results of a democratic political process. Yechury said he offered both Maoists and the government ideas on how to massage the political process to avoid a breakdown.

-- Anti-U.S. rhetoric from CPI-M, which has ratcheted up in recent weeks, is essentially the party's "fall back" position and there is no consensus within the party on its America bashing.

-- The CPI-M does not intend to join forces with the opposition coalition UNPA in 2009 general elections.

-- He may travel to the U.S. for October 2 Peace Day commemorations at the UN, and could perhaps peel off for the International Visitor program Post has invited him to.

End Summary.

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12. (C) In an August 9 tour d'horizon meeting with PolCouns, CPI-M Head of International Department Sitaram Yechury assured PolCouns that, while his party would express opposition to the 123 Agreement during debate expected next week on the floor of Parliament, it would not formally stand in the way of the Agreement, nor would it join the opposition BJP in demanding a vote under Rule 184 of the Parliament's procedures. Furthermore, the Left will not take action to take down the government, he stated. In fact, expecting pressure to arise from the BJP to move against the government, Yechury said if pushed he plans to call out the BJP as jealous that the deal didn't happen when it was in power. Yechury said he expected the BJP would disrupt the 123 discussion, likely taking one day to force chaos upon the debate in order to score political points, but ultimately the Prime Minister will be able to give his suo moto statement and the Parliament will move on to other business. Yechury noted that CPI-M's position has always been to oppose a nuclear bomb for India, but gave credit to Indian negotiators for finding creative solutions to the impasses during negotiations. He pointed out that when he had submitted his well publicized nine concerns over the deal, the Prime Minister responded with fourteen answers (simultaneously responding to other issues raised by others), and signaled that he, personally, was satisfied with the agreement.

13. (C) Senior journalist Manoj Joshi and MPs A.R. Shaheen and Mehbooba Mufti recently echoed Yechury's analysis in conversations with DepPolCouns. They asserted that they Left would never risk the return of the "detested" BJP by

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triggering a real confrontation in Parliament that might bring the government down.

Nepalese Maoists Should Seek Peaceful Role, Support Elections  
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14. (C) Turning to his July 24 visit to Nepal, Yechury said it was the first time during his numerous trips there that he came back with a sense of pessimism. Maoists have just come to realize, he said, that their support among the broader population is not nearly what they had claimed, which has put them in the dilemma of facing an election which will reduce the one-third portion they currently hold in the Constituent Assembly. Regardless, Yechury said he urged the Maoists to support free elections, saying they would lose credibility and open doors for intervention should they be seen as subverting democracy. The Maoists will have difficulty breaking out of this dilemma, he reasoned. Maoists are further concerned that several of their top leaders would not win a seat in the new parliament, he reported. Yechury said he suggested to both Maoists and Congress leaders that one way around this concern would be a political agreement that each party would be assured of a minimum of the 240 seats in parliament -- Yechury suggested fifteen each -- to ensure its top leaders would be included. Another concern for Nepal, Yechury explained, is Maoists soldiers disappearing from cantonments, and the wider Maoist forces facing the prospect of being out of work under a new government. Yechury said he has suggested that paramilitary work be found for the Maoist forces, such as in border patrol or forest protection. (Note: Yechury related that when he returns from his Nepal trips, he briefs Foreign Minister Mukherjee directly. End Note.) Yechury said he would be pleased to meet with Ambassador Powell if she has an opportunity to visit New Delhi in September.

Anti-U.S. Rhetoric A Fall Back  
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15. (C) PolCouns raised the fact that anti-U.S. rhetoric from the Left had increased in the past few weeks, particularly

over the 123 Agreement and India's closer relations with the U.S., Japan and Australia, which the CPI-M official website claimed was part of a plan to make India a military ally of the U.S. Yechury dismissed the sincerity of the rhetoric, noting that there were differing opinions in the party regarding India's new relationship with America, and calling America bashing the "convenient fall back position" of older party members.

No CPI-M - UNPA Alliance On The Horizon

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16. (C) Discussing his party's plans for the foreseeable political calendar, Yechury began by confirming his party's support for Hamid Ansari in the August 10 election for India's vice-president, calling Ansari "not overtly political, but a solid individual" who could relate to India's 170 million Muslims. Looking further down the political road, Yechury said CPI-M would not be joining forces with opposition coalition United National Progressive Alliance (UNPA) in the 2009 general elections, although he left open the possibility that there may be coordination "in some races." Regarding rumors that Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee was considering a run at the prime ministership in 2009, Yechury said it was unlikely Mukherjee would be anyone's -- particularly Sonia Gandhi's -- first choice, however, there was a small chance he could slip in as a compromise candidate.

Possible U.S. Trip

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17. (C) Yechury closed the conversation by intimating that he was considering an invitation to travel with Sonia Gandhi to New York for October 2 "Gandhi Day of Peace and Non-Violence"

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commemoration at the United Nations in New York. Should he attend, he would like to work into the trip the International Visitors program Post has invited him to. He will inform PolCouns as soon as he makes travel decisions, he said.  
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